

"DEN PERMANENTE" through 25 Years.

By Asger Fischer

Occasioned by the anniversary of "Den Permanente", its director, Mr. Asger Fischer, shortly outlines the development of this institution during the past 25 years.

In a following article, one of the pioneers from 1931, Kay Bojesen, has outlined the purposes for which DEN PERMANENTE was founded, and recounted the initial difficulties which were overcome thanks to the fighting spirit, unfailing energy, confidence in the justification and significance of the enterprise, and the generosity displayed by everybody concerned, the first committee, the members, and the friends of the organization.

We who were to carry on and extend these activities are greatly indebted to the group of people who, headed by the late Chr. Grauballe, managed to solve the problem which is now being tackled all over the world - successfully or unsuccessfully.

Taken by and large, the principles laid down and the traditions created in the first years of DEN PERMANENTE's existence have been followed during the years and have been fundamental to the results achieved in recent years.

Even in the very first years, vigorous efforts were made to arouse interest abroad in Danish arts and crafts. In 1935, DEN PERMANENTE held an exhibition in Monte Carlo under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Frederik and Prince Louis of Monaco. Mr. Alex. Troedsson represented DEN PERMANENTE on this occasion. The late King and Queen of Denmark paid a visit to the exhibition. The Danish consul at Monte Carlo, Mr. Geo Jorck, rendered invaluable support in the organization of the exhibition, and was appointed honorary member of DEN PERMANENTE.

The same year, DEN PERMANENTE participated in the World Exhibition in Brussels, where it was represented at the opening by Mr. Chr. Grauballe and Mr. Alex. Troedsson.

In 1937, on the occasion of the World Exhibition in Paris, DEN PERMANENTE and the Danish Society of Arts and Crafts and Industrial Design collaborated in the publication of a booklet entitled "Les Arts Industriels et Décoratifs". And in 1938, DEN PERMANENTE participated in the first international exhibition of crafts in Berlin.

The U.S.A. was never left out of mind, and in 1939, a large travelling sales exhibition was staged. It was shown in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Pittsburg, Buffalo and Minneapolis before the world situation, in 1940, put an abrupt end to further initiatives in the export field.

The years of occupation became a more quiet period for DEN PERMANENTE. Attention was focused on internal work, financial consolidation was aimed at, and it was tried to remedy the difficulties arising out of the situation, amongst which the shortage of materials was one of the most perceptible.

The tenth anniversary, in 1941, was marked by a celebration which was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Frederik, then our patron, and Mr. Halfdan Hendriksen, Minister of Commerce.

DEN PERMANENTE started in 1931 in modest rooms on the third floor of Vesterport; in 1936, the organization moved to more spacious rooms on the ground floor in the interior of the building, and from there, in 1939, to ground floor and mezzanine rooms overlooking Vesterbrogade (part of the premises now occupied).

In 1944, a fatal thing happened to DEN PERMANENTE. Vesterport was requisitioned by the occupation powers at two days' notice. As a makeshift, a modest, temporary salesroom was obtained in Østergade, and Mr. Grauballe made storing space available, and so the threat of complete closing-down was averted.

At the end of the occupation, the continued existence of DEN PERMANENTE was dependent upon a financial reconstruction and a solution of the problem of accommodation. The task was immense, and the difficulties seemed, at times, unsurmountable. But thanks to financial backing from the Ministry of Commerce, guaranteed capital, temporarily made available by members of the Danish Society of Arts and Crafts and Industrial Design, grants received from foundations, the co-operation of many other benevolent forces, and above all to the indefatigable efforts displayed by Mr. Aage E. Jensen, the newly elected chairman, DEN PERMANENTE was able on December 11, 1945, to re-open in the previously occupied premises in Vesterport, to which had now been added a suite of rooms overlooking Trommesalen, redecorated and re-equipped by Mogens Lassen, the architect.

The idea of extending the premises of DEN PERMANENTE to comprise the entire corner of Vesterport was not a new one. As early as at the removal in 1939, Gerhard Nielsen, the old ceramist, made a plea for the acquisition of the entire corner; "We shall certainly need it", he said. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the justification of his request.

In 1949, a department of Fine Arts was added to the Exhibition. And, as the result of our co-operation with the National Board for Travellers' Articles, a special souvenir department was set up at the end of 1947. The efforts directed to the promotion of high-quality souvenirs were later extended when DEN PERMANENTE, in 1954, took over the souvenir pavilion in the Tivoli.

With the end of the occupation, the export problem came to the front once more. As early as in 1946, with the support of the Ministry of Commerce, a tour of the U.S.A. was made for the purpose of establishing contacts, and in 1948, DEN PERMANENTE sent a large, representative selection of exhibits to Sct. Eriksmessen (The Saint Erik Fair) in Stockholm.

Export sales - activities in this field were taken up particularly for the benefit of the small producers - rose steadily, and a special export showroom soon became a necessity. In the first years we had to make do with the available basement rooms, but when export sales doubled from 1954 to 1955 it became imperative to find an effective solution to the shortage of space under which the export department was suffering.

On August 25. 1956, our newly acquired export rooms were opened on the first floor of No. 2, Trommesalen.

On numerous occasions in recent years we have shown small prestige exhibitions in connection with Danish and international exhibitions at home and abroad; and in March, 1955, an exhibition organized jointly by the Danish Society of Arts and Crafts and Industrial Design and DEN PERMANENTE was opened by Mr. Aage E. Jensen in the Gewerbemuseum in Basle.

The same year, at the invitation of the Ministry of State, DEN PERMANENTE showed an exhibition in the Denmark Hall of the Denmark House in Paris. At the opening we were represented by Mr. Alex. Troedsson.

In 1952, the Queen honoured us with taking over the patronage of DEN PERMANENTE.

The number of visitors to DEN PERMANENTE has multiplied since the start in 1931. The number of exhibitors has risen from 120 to 350; and the number of employees, which was 10 in 1931 and 30 in 1946, is now 80. The turnover, which in 1946 was eight times the initial figure of 1932, is now sixfold that of 1946.

In the past years, the co-operation between DEN PERMANENTE and other institutions - public as well as private - has been continuously extended and has contributed substantially to the results we are able to show to-day at the 25th anniversary.

The framework of our co-operation with the Danish Society of Arts and Crafts and Industrial Design was strengthened when DEN PERMANENTE was reorganized in 1945; and we enjoy the benefit of sympathetic and successful relations with the Ministry of State, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Commerce, the foreign embassies, the Federation of Danish Industries, the Tourist Association, Tourist goods committee, the society "Made in Denmark", the directors of the Tivoli, the schools of the Society of Technology, the Danish Society, and many others. In addition, we have always received the favourable support of the Danish and foreign press.

The cornerstone of DEN PERMANENTE's existence is, and will always be, the proficient Danish craftsman and the alert and clever industrial designer. The future depends on new artistic efforts, a high quality of craftsmanship and technical skill, and solid unity.

If all good efforts are devoted to this purpose, Danish arts and crafts will continue for a long time ahead to have immeasurable possibilities of winning tens of thousands of new admirers who will not only buy our beautiful productions, but will also, when the opportunity arises, favour us with a personal visit.

Thus "DEN PERMANENTE was established".

By Kay Bojesen.

One of the founders narrating

On June 26, 1931, a group of persons, including myself, especially interested in Danish arts and crafts and Danish industrial design received a letter from Chr. Grauballe, the Director of Holmegaards Glasværk. It ran:

This is to inform you that the Society named "The Permanent Exhibition of Danish Arts and Crafts" will hold its first meeting on Wednesday, July 8, 1931 at 8 p.m. in the offices of Holmegaards Glasværk, Nyhavn 12. In the absence of notification to the contrary, I shall count on your presence.

sgd. Christian Grauballe.

This meeting resulted in the election of a committee composed of the following persons:

Chairman: Chr. Grauballe, Director of Holmegaards Glasværk.
Vice-Chairman: E. Rager, Civil Engineer (Louis Poulsen & Co.). Treasurer: C. Volmer Nordlunde, Printer. Secretary: V. Stender, Managing Director (C. Stenders Kunstforlag).
Press Section: Kay Bojesen, Silversmith. Members of the Committee: Mrs. Emilie Trolle (Fru Trolles Vævestue), Aug. Sandgren, Bookbinder, Jacob E. Bang, Architect, C. Andreasen, Managing Director (Andreasen & Lachmann), Chr. E. Hansen, Managing Director (Fritz Hansens Eftf.), Alex. Troedsson, counsellor at law, was appointed legal adviser to the Committee.

The editor of the periodical of the Society of Arts and Crafts "Nyt Tidsskrift for Kunstindustri" Sigurd Schultz, the art historian, was elected censor for the Exhibition, Jacob E. Bang its architect, and Bahne Preisler its executive secretary and canvasser.

The Statutes were drawn up, and it is fitting here to quote Articles 1 and 2:

Article 1

The name of the Society is "The Permanent Exhibition of Danish Arts and Crafts".

Article 2

The objective of the Society is: To acquire and maintain a permanent showroom in Copenhagen for the promotion and sale, at home and abroad, of the products of Danish arts and crafts.

Premises were rented on the third floor of the newly built, copperplated "Vesterport", popularly nicknamed "The Copper". And soon the long name of the Exhibition was abbreviated into "Den Permanente", the nom de guerre by which it is known at home and throughout the world.

The Permanent's infancy was a hard time for the Committee; innumerable meetings were held; everybody contributed freely - giving both time and small loans free of interest - when "the permanent infant" was about to die in the incubator. Truly, many hurdles had to be surmounted; frequently it had to be put on debate whether the purchase of mere trifles, such as a floormat, could be afforded; in the end it was usually decided to defer the matter, confident that at the next committee meeting one of the wealthier members would make a present of the article wanted. When we were to type our letters, Villy Stender presented the institution with a rather oldish typewriter, which was at once christened "Ipsen's Widow" (the name of the firm in which Mr. Stender was a director). The members, too, were most generous in many ways. Gifts, big and small, were received for members' lotteries - there was always a chance to win them back. All the foundations were pestered, in season and out of season; collections were made whenever there was something to be had, for we were determined to succeed - and we did succeed - in spite of all the pessimists, and they will always be plenty.

On December 5, 1931, the Committee was able to open the gates for the inauguration ceremony, which was held in the rented rooms. The seats of honour in the crowded hall were reserved for the then Crown Prince Frederik, who just from the beginning had shown his interest in The Permanent by taking over the protection of the exhibition, Mr. Stauning, the Prime Minister, and Mr. Hauge, the Minister of Commerce. Chr. Grauballe, the Chairman of the Permanent gave the audience an elaborate account of the aims and organization of the new institution which, as we were told, started with 126 exhibitors, whose stands covered a total floor space of 730 square metres.

The primary aim of The Permanent was to support the many craftsmen and industrialists whose workshops were hidden away in basements and intermediate buildings distant from the main shopping streets. Here they would be given the great, mutual chance.

Then followed a speech by the Minister of Commerce, and Crown Prince Frederik declared The Permanent Exhibition open.

The public almost promptly found their way to this new "art shop" centrally situated as it was, the centre of business life having then moved from Kongens Nytorv to the Town Hall Square and farther out. It did not take long before domestic and foreign buyers, many of which were pressed for time, began to take an interest in this forum for arts and crafts. Here they were offered an excellent general view of high-class articles and a display of the latest novelties.

On these two lines - the shop selling direct to the customers and the wholesale and export business - The Permanent was carried through the 25 years making it what it is to-day: the economic factor so important to our arts and crafts and industrial design, and the organization so indispensable to our cultural life.

Of course, The Permanent had to have a managing director. He was procured by Chr. Grauballe, and it was Captain C.Ph. Seidelin who became the first managing director of the institution. As I happened to be at loose ends at the time, about to set up my Bredgade business, I was able to lend a hand in the daily management of The Permanent during the first year of its existence.

It is enjoyable for "an old boy" like myself to look back on the years of struggle leading up to the establishment of The Permanent. One was young and full of zeal then and like others of the same mind, ever dissatisfied with the state of affairs, not least with what we called the failing initiative of The Society of Arts and Crafts.

I advanced my views in an interview which appeared under the headlines: Arts and Crafts Homeless. Foreign Buyers Disinclined to Look on Arts and Crafts in the Backyards.

The time had come when "something had to be done", and on September 7, 1928, I wrote a letter to the Committee of The Society of Arts and Crafts in which I suggested that meetings should be held for the members of the Society to debate the problem then stirring, particularly those of the artists craftsman.

The Committee became interested, and this interest was manifested in a letter to me, dated November 29 of that year, requesting me to draft a proposal for such a meeting, and to open the debate.

There were, of course, many questions to be debated, but I shall confine myself to mentioning the points relating to my proposal about "a permanent exhibition of Danish arts and crafts".

The meeting, which enjoyed a large and vivid attendance, took place in the building of The Trade Guild on January 31, 1929. Parts of my opening speech are quoted below:

First of all we must acknowledge the fact that the period of the elaborate art nouveau is over. We are about to enter an age of simplification where the main emphasis will be on the practical design of utensils. The new age is showing its face everywhere. People are already coming to our workshops of their own accord, asking us to remove from utensils the frills which previously they found so pretty. And many of the utensils imported from abroad bear evident signs that the practical outlook of the new epoch is gaining ground. Therefore, there is every reason for all of us to be on the alert. In fact, foreign goods present a serious threat to our home market - if we are not in on it right from the outset, and if we do not consolidate our position, we simply run the risk of landing in the ditch, and certainly would not deserve a better fate.

We know only too well that Denmark is a small country. We live, so to speak, on the doorstep to the highway of Europe, and what is more, the door is left wide open for invasion by anything, good or bad, exported by foreign producers who have a remarkable flair for finding the markets where there is a little money to be made, and they are sure to be immediately on the spot. Our system of free trade affords us practically no protection and, to make things even more difficult for us - nearly all foreign borders are closed by high tariff walls which tend to make our own export almost impossible. But under these conditions, when most of the members of this Society have to live on the dishes served on the domestic plate, it is imperative that we utilize, to the best of our advantage, any possibility which the Society may find of advertizing our own products.

Unfortunately we are bound to see the shops - which ought to be our allies, but which importers and wholesalers have so cleverly captured for the sale of foreign goods - shock-full of novel, international products. Therefore, the Society should set itself the task of finding the places where there is the mere shadow of a chance of selling the good Danish products, and where these are not liable to be lost in the crowd.

In a struggle like this where, in reality, we are so few, it is of course essential that we look for allies wherever these are to be found, and as I see it, much has been left undone in this respect.

There are quite a few organisations and private firms in this country which, apart from idealistic sympathies, may have an economic interest in supporting us. Here too, it would be of the utmost importance if the Society would try to establish contacts and find the places where a drive could be made.

First of all we have our excellent Museum of Applied Art which through all times ought to be the natural cornerstone, steadfastly guarding the living, national production of arts and crafts of any age and protector of the Danish crafts.

.....
It would, therefore, be most useful if a special collection of modern works was formed in the museum - the works of yesterday and of to-day. A really representative collection of modern design would be of inestimable value to us, the producers. In this respect, we are emptyhanded, in fact; nowhere is it possible for the students or the public to get anything like a fair view of the domestic production of our time. The foreign visitor who has been told that a modern Danish industrial art of a high standard really exists, will have to hunt up the bits and pieces by himself, and there is always a grave risk that, in doing so, he may see only plagiarisms and thus wrongly doubt the reputed fame.

And now we ourselves, busily occupied in our workshops, we only have the often very mediocre minor shows to give us any idea of what is produced in this country and by whom - but these exhibitions certainly do not give a true picture because too many of the things, that really count and are significant, are often missing.

.....
With regard to the publicity aspect, much material is waiting to be utilized to our advantage. The basis for a publicity drive is, of course, that we produce some decent articles, but as these are made with the object of being sold, they should be put on display and given publicity, so that the public will know that they are there, and are worth possessing. Besides, people should be given the opportunity to compare our production with the ordinary commercial article. To help us in this we have, in addition to exhibitions, all the aids of modern technique, such as newspapers, wireless, and trade journals.

.....
To summarize:

The Museum of Applied Art should aim at the acquisition of a

collection of modern works in order to make it possible for us, craftsmen and industrialists, at any time to have a view of the production of the moment - a collection which may be of help in our publicity, instructive to students and a healthy and proper guidance for the general public.

As will be seen, what I suggested was only the staging in the Museum of Applied Art of a small, but permanent and varying exhibition of the latest productions.

But it was Chr. Grauballe who took up the idea and carried it into effect in the only sensible way: to make such a permanent show of Danish arts and crafts an institution privately owned by the members of a newly established society.

A survey.

On December 5 of this year The Permanent will celebrate its 25th anniversary. During this period the institution has had only three managing directors: Captain C.Ph. Seidelin, Thorvald Nielsen, and, since 1945, Asger Fischer.

The figures of the statistical survey will speak for themselves. They show the curve of the 25 years of The Permanent's life; the difficult but pleasant start, the period of stagnation during the war, and then, after the liberation, the great roaring success under the efficient management, supported by an energetic committee under the chairmanship of Aage E. Jensen.

DANISH ARTS AND CRAFTS

A PERMANENT SALES EXHIBITION

"DEN PERMANENTE"

The Permanent Exhibition of Arts and Crafts, where the best products of contemporary Danish craftsmanship are on view and can be purchased, has fast become a leading attraction with visitors to the Danish capital. Started on a small scale in 1931 by a few interested people, it has gone on expanding so that it now comprises the works of some 350 producers tastefully arranged in show-rooms facing the Central Railway Station. A section for modern paintings and sculpture was added in 1945, and a display of officially approved souvenirs in 1947.

The right to display goods at this exhibition is reserved to members of the Danish Arts and Crafts Association and their products must be approved by a selection committee elected at the general meeting of the association sponsoring the exhibition. The sole criterion in selecting is quality. Small craftsmen from remote parts of Denmark may be seen exhibiting alongside the Royal Copenhagen Porcelain Factory, Georg Jensen Silver and other Danish firms of world reputation; the exhibition is in fact, fully representative of all that is best in contemporary Danish Applied Arts.

All objects remain the property of the producer until sold, and a monthly account is rendered. Since each stand is marked with the producer's name, it becomes his shop window; some exhibitors, indeed, have no other outlet for their products. As displayed articles are sold, they are replaced by others, taken from stock held on the premises, the exhibition thus remaining permanent but ever-changing.

The exhibition is arranged in eight sections, three of which - ceramics, furniture and lamps - occupy a whole floor.

The Furniture Section probably shows contemporary Danish applied art at its best; here are fine craftsmanship and clean lines; hand-made furniture unexcelled in strength and beauty. Single pieces as well as suites are displayed, in the choice woods which Danish cabinet-makers prefer - above all teak but also rosewood, mahogany, oak, oregon pine, walnut, elm, cherry, maple and beech. The basis of the success of Danish furniture-making, besides fine craftsmanship, is the close contact and cooperation which has long existed between cabinet-maker and designer. Alongside the craft products is a single display of factory-made chairs and tables, in native and foreign woods, so perfect in finish that they might at first be mistaken for hand-made.

The Ceramics Section, comprising porcelain, earthenware, and stoneware represents a Danish industry throughout, since clay is the one industrial raw material of which Denmark has plenty. The ceramics section presents a fascinating medley of colour, shapes and decoration, of glazed, semi-glazed and unglazed ware.

The Lamp Section comprises a fine display of lamp vases in pottery, glass, wood and metals, and a multitude of shades, decorated and undecorated, plain or ingeniously folded and pleated.

The Silverware Section includes table-ware and ornamental works by all the leading silversmiths of Denmark as well as jewelry and trinkets in silver, enamel, amber, bone and china, objects in china, bronze and pewter, and utilitarian articles carved in bone. Here, too, is a display of glass, including undecorated uniques and hand-cut and hand painted pieces, and a wide selection of stainless steel, tableware and hollowware.

The Textile Section is well stocked with hand-woven and hand-printed fabrics, table cloths and tablemats and napkins, appliqué and hand-knitted work, and decorative batik.

The Woodware Section includes, besides bowls, trays, boxes and the internationally famous Danish wooden toys, a collection of horn spoons and handplaited articles of straw. Straw-plaiting is an ancient Danish cottage craft that has been successfully adapted to modern requirements. The motley character of the Souvenir Stand, included in the woodware section, contrasts with the severe traditions of this exhibition but serves its purpose admirably as an attractive model souvenir kiosk.

The Arts Section shows a cross-section of the works of contemporary painters and sculptors of achievement and promise.

Although exhibits are thus arranged section by section, monotony is avoided by grouping them, in addition, all over the exhibition. Laid tables and coloured rugs, paintings and sculpture, vases and ash trays, impart a homely look to the furniture section; pottery sets off nicely the character of the wood in the woodware section; printed fabrics make a handsome background to the white glaze of pottery. The interior decorator of this exhibition has the two-fold task of making the best of the individual article and harmonising the whole.

The importance of the exhibition to craftsmen is self-evident, each gains direct contact with the public, contact which otherwise, for most of them, would be difficult to obtain. To the arts and crafts and the applied arts industry as a whole it is equally important, because it is influential in raising the general standard of production, while every new creation of merit is given an opportunity to present itself. What is more, there are show-rooms where exhibitors may introduce their products to the public in special collective exhibitions. Museums, collectors, manufacturers, and the press are thus able to follow artistic trends at close quarters. It is no less important that prospective purchasers, and tourists with limited time to spare, can inspect an all-round and carefully selected collection of the best and latest products of Danish craftsmanship and applied art all under one roof.

The scope of the exhibition was recently enlarged by the addition of a sample display room for the convenience of foreign retailers, who need no longer inspect our retail floors for suitable articles which-when found- might not be available for export in quantity.

Samples of all articles available for export in quantities can now be viewed in the export room, where also arrangements are made for their purchase and shipment. The exhibition offers thus the service of arranging the export of smaller consignments of miscellaneous articles, from a variety of producers, in a combination packing which will invariably save transportation costs. No extra charge is made for this facility and the prices are the standard wholesale prices. Hundreds of cases containing these products of modern craftsmanship - cultural ambassadors of Denmark to other lands - are now despatched yearly from this permanent exhibition where any displayed object can be purchased.



DEN PERMANENTE: The Permanent Exhibition of Danish Arts and Crafts.

ARTIST'S CONTACT WITH WORLD MARKET

by Asger Fischer

Director of the Permanent Exhibition.

Goods of exquisite quality, together with intensive marketing, have transformed, in the space of twenty-five years, a humble souvenir shop into one of Copenhagen's best-known attractions, as well as an important export business plying the contact between the small producer and the big world.

For contemporary arts and crafts the international public during the last two or three decades has turned increasingly to Scandinavia, and in many aspects to applied art and industrial design Denmark now occupies a leading position. "Danish contemporary" has become an accepted term, and the Permanent Exhibition of Arts and Crafts in Copenhagen has established its name, DEN PERMANENTE, as a symbol of it.

DEN PERMANENTE was started in 1931 by a small group of artist craftsmen and industrial designers. At its twentyfifth anniversary in December 1956 it could look back on a rapid development that would have surprised those whose object was "the establishment of a permanent exhibition room in Copenhagen for the publicizing and sale at home and abroad of the best in Danish arts and crafts and applied arts".

The organization was founded by private initiative in a form which did not require much initial capital, the individual members supplying their own products for exhibition and sale on a commission basis. For some years the establishment encountered financial difficulties and was obliged to seek assistance from the Government and private foundations. But the trend already referred to and the growing interest in Denmark among tourists have brought about such an expansion in the sales that the organization is now fully self-supporting.

The activities of DEN PERMANENTE receive valuable support through its association with national bodies such as the Federation of Danish Industries and the Joint Representation of Danish Handicrafts, and it is under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Ingrid.

The exhibition area of over 2,000 square yards made up of ground floor, first floor, and basement is put to the utmost use in order to give each of the 350 associated members the best possible display conditions. A selection committee, appointed by members at the general meeting, constantly studies new material submitted for exhibition. Often as much as 80 per cent. is rejected in order to maintain the standard.

As one of the measures to raise the quality of Danish tourists souvenirs DEN PERMANENTE, opened in 1947 a special tourist section. This activity was extended in 1954 by the acquisition of the souvenir pavilion in the Tivoli pleasure gardens. Both the tourist section and the Tivoli souvenir pavilion record mounting sales every season.

DANISH MEMBERS ONLY

The firm principle of accepting only Danish members in the association, and of exhibiting and selling only the products of members, is an absolute guarantee that every object displayed, whether it be a simple pottery ash-tray or a fine piece of cabinet-making, is Danish in form and origin. The entire exhibition can thus be regarded as a souvenir shop in the best sense of the term.

Apart from the Tivoli souvenir pavilion the work of DEN PERMANENTE is centred in the exhibition rooms at Vesterport. Here are gathered the threads which connect it with the world, through the rapidly increasing number of visitors and through the extensive correspondence which results.

The question of exports to foreign firms soon arose, and was taken up on rational lines just after the war. Concurrently, the work of organizing the production of individual craftsmen began, with a view to enabling orders to be booked from samples: a task in which great difficulties have had to be surmounted.

In 1951 an export sample room was established on humble lines in the basement. A year or two later the samples were transferred to a larger room, as an increasing number of exhibitors wished to be represented.

Export measures have chiefly concentrated on catering for the smaller producers. Sales are made almost exclusively to foreign retailers, and only in a few special cases to wholesale dealers. Bent on en-

During the best possible status in the various markets where Danish arts and crafts are sold, the association has secured permanent contact with a number of firms of the highest standing.

Steadily increasing interest in this side of the activities made it imperative to find special accommodation for it. Consequently, a sample room measuring 100 square yards has been opened, with offices attached, in direct communication with the permanent exhibition rooms. Export customers, after visiting the exhibition and gaining an insight into the possibilities offered by Danish arts and crafts, can proceed to the export rooms in order to obtain further details about the products exported by DEN PERMANENTE and make out their orders from the sample collections.

The association arranges for collective shipment of the work of various producers, to the economic advantage of the purchaser. This and the saving of time due to the placing of collective orders have made the export facilities extremely popular with both purchaser and producer.

DAY-TO-DAY CONTACT

Besides making direct export arrangements, DEN PERMANENTE establishes day-to-day contact between foreign purchasers visiting the exhibition and producers who have their own export organizations.

Arts and crafts, particularly in view of their recent development, have become one of the promoters of Danish good will. For them to remain so it is essential that the standard should be maintained and that prospective buyers in other countries should have opportunities of making their acquaintance. These are the objects that DEN PERMANENTE seeks to further.

D E N P E R M A N E N T E

The Permanent Exhibition of Danish Arts and Crafts.
Under the protection of Her Majesty The Queen of Denmark.

25th Anniversary December 5th 1956.

Something which has proved a success in Denmark only.

When Crown Prince Frederik, as the Patron of the exhibition, declared DEN PERMANENTE permanently open, this witty turn of phrase amused the solemn inauguration audience. But surely, some of the smiles reflected a certain amount of scepticism. Would this new, untried undertaking really become permanent?

This was twenty-five years ago, on December 5. DEN PERMANENTE survived, and in this year of its 25th anniversary it is even doing better than ever before.

But who conceived the idea of "The Permanent Exhibition of Danish Arts and crafts in Copenhagen", as it is called officially? The question was put in an interview with Mr. Asger Fischer, the managing director of the institution.

- It was Kay Bojesen who originated the scheme of such an organization for the display of the fine and beautiful productions of Danish arts and crafts and industrial design. This year, Kay Bojesen has joined our Committee - an act of homage on his part, as his own business is actually taking all his time. As a creative artist craftsman he is a true genius. Think of the imagination and varied inventiveness he has displayed - and his charming way of doing it! To make a thing pretty, and to do it cheerfully, makes it doubly attractive to us all.

Once the idea was there, Mr. Chr. Grauballe took the matter in hand and carried the scheme into practice, supported by a group of enthusiasts. Let me mention Mr. Chr. H. Olesen, Mr. E. Rager, and Mr. Alex. Troedsson, who has been our legal adviser ever since. Many problems presented themselves, particularly because DEN PERMANENTE was originally intended to be only an exhibition and not a shop. The fact that it did not earn any profit, made it even more difficult, and DEN PERMANENTE was gradually losing favour with the public, because they could not buy the things exhibited. A visitor, who wishes to acquire one of the exhibits, must be able to get it then and there. And so DEN PERMANENTE soon had to be converted into a shop. This made it easier for it to perform its primary duty, to bring the individual artist craftsman and the small industrial producer into contact with the market. He was thus saved the trouble of getting his things sold, could turn his attention to the workshop itself, devote all his time to giving expression to his ideas, and work out new things in peace and quiet. But not only the small ones came, also the big concerns joined in - porcelain, silver - and the cabinetmakers, who in collaboration with leading architects have achieved a remarkably fine co-ordination of art and craftsmanship. The furniture makers took the right view of DEN PERMANENTE; it really was significant to have exhibition premises in the centre of the city, where they could show their best things collectively; and this has afforded an excellent interaction. The lovely handmade furniture is a central feature of our arrangements, it holds together what we are otherwise building up about it.

After the war, Queen Ingrid became the Patroness of DEN PERMANENTE. Since 1945, Mr. Aage E. Jensen has been Chairman of the Committee. With his prudence and strong attitude he has managed to unite the manifold and varied interests of the group of people backing up DEN PERMANENTE.

- Surely, this is not always an easy job!

- This group is made up of widely different personalities with different interests and viewpoints. The little man will naturally view things from a different angle than the big concern which, in his opinion, might not need a helping hand just as much as he does. The divergent opinions are, of course, expressed at ordinary meetings and at general meetings. But by explaining things in a sober and fair manner, and by always giving everybody his due, Aage E. Jensen is the man who is capable of steering clear of trouble. The ideal principle on which DEN PERMANENTE is based make them stick together in spite of all.

We are still trying to give full scope to the small producer, to allow him space irrespective of how much he sells. And we understand from the customers that they appreciate the idea that the small artist craftsman is allowed to come to the fore with his characteristic production. To the customers, this mixture of handmade and industrially produced articles gives DEN PERMANENTE a fascinating character of its own. Quite amusingly, many foreigners regard DEN PERMANENTE as a museum of applied art, and to them it is, of course, an added charm that they are allowed to buy the museum pieces.

- DEN PERMANENTE is a peculiar undertaking in many respects.

- It is a society of which the exhibitors are members against an annual subscription fee of DKr. 25.-. That is all

they need pay so long as they do not sell anything. An artist craftsman may thus sit in one of the remotest corners of the land, make things on a small scale, and send them in here. Only when they are sold, there is a commission to pay. We receive the goods on commission. They, in themselves, constitute what others regard as capital. Apart from a modest reserve fund, we have only the cash-in-hand, which represents the sale during the month that elapses before the settlement of accounts with the exhibitors. We are thus working with the exhibitors' own money. DEN PERMANENTE as such is not supposed to be a profit-making business; it just has to break even. This enables the managers to raise the standard of the exhibition and to create a special atmosphere, something that would be difficult if we had to pay a normal dividend to shareholders. Many countries have tried to copy DEN PERMANENTE, but these undertakings soon became failures, because shareholders claimed dividends: the fundamental principle of the Danish organization was disregarded. We are able to concentrate on our primary function, to exhibit the things in a beautiful and appropriate setting, and ensure for the individual craftsman the greatest sale possible.

Here we are touching upon a highly essential factor. Before a thing can be shown at DEN PERMANENTE, it must be passed by a judging committee. This committee is elected at the annual general meeting and has absolute power to decide which things should be admitted. No matter how salable an article is, it must not be presented for sale if it has been rejected by the committee. A producer may fail to understand why a thing is rejected when it may be a veritable gold mine. But the decisive factor is the thing itself and its quality, and if it is obvious that the creation of the thing cost blood, sweat, and tears, we are prepared to sponsor it, just like an

old uncle would do, even though the creator is an unknown artist. This demand for quality is the background of the high reputation which we enjoy in the public mind.

- Does DEN PERMANENTE depend on the tourists for its existence?

- Were it not for the foreign buyers, it would be impossible to maintain the present scope of DEN PERMANENTE. After the boom in tourism - the tourism which Danish arts and crafts contributed to create - we have built up a large and permanent goodwill with which we are pleased, also because it brings foreign currency into the country. In terms of cash, our turnover this year is sixfold that of 1946; between three fifths and two thirds of this amount derives from foreign customers.

- Has DEN PERMANENTE always been doing so well?

- Unfortunately not. For quite a number of years, the exhibition was run at a constant deficit totalling, I think, DKr. 250,000.-. This deficit was made up either by grants received from the Ministry of Commerce, various institutions, and private funds, or by exhibitors or the members of the Committee, who paid out of their own pockets to keep things going. I am glad to say that, in recent years, there has been a steady progress. Originally, there were 130 exhibitors and 10 employees. At the moment, we have 350 exhibitors and 80 employees.

- 80 seems a large number!

- Trading on commission entails a complicated accounting system. We must keep control of each individual thing and attend to the interests of each individual exhibitor. Besides, the packing of goods for export requires great care. What is more, in addition to attending to our own exports, we spend

quite a lot of time acting as export intermediaries. To take an example: When buyers from the big American stores come to Denmark, they are not always looking only for the products of arts and crafts, but also for many other kinds of Danish goods. Usually, the Americans must get a lot of things done in no time, and having us, whom they know, at their disposal, they find it too troublesome to look up other firms. They go straight to the matter. And we regard it as our duty to assist them, also because in this manner we help to bring about export sales outside our own field. If a foreign visitor is here for only three hours, which is often the case, we must strike while the iron is hot, and over the telephone we then establish the contacts he wants. Big business has often been done on such occasions.

- You were a bookseller and a publisher, weren't you, before you went into this mixed business?

- It was, I admit, taking a plunge, although I was selling paintings, sculptures and reproductions in my bookshop. This part of my business, the art section, I assigned to DEN PERMANENTE, and good works of art do add a pleasant touch to the exhibition interiors.

- But even so, you were going to deal in other articles?

- One article or another - that does not make much difference. The decisive thing is that one likes the things one has to do with, that one believes in them, otherwise one cannot sell them. And it is a great advantage to be able to tell exactly what a customer wants even before he himself has made up his mind. But then it is wonderful sport to take a customer around and show him the things that are likely to

attract him. If one is asked to choose for instance three things on a certain price level as presents for three different people one does not know, well, that is great fun, but it may also be a strain on an honest mind, even bordering on torture. One becomes over-critical for moral reasons, one thinks that one can hardly find things pretty enough, because one has to decide a question of taste on behalf of somebody else. But there is no denying that it is a torture which at the same time is a pleasure.

- How will the anniversary be celebrated?

- We are arranging an exhibition of the very best things DEN PERMANENTE is able to produce, a prestige exhibition where the things on display will be sold on condition that they are allowed to remain there during the week in which the exhibition is open. In the past six months, we have collected things, sorted them out, and put them aside for this particular purpose. In addition, we are organizing two special exhibitions, one showing the products of a hitherto unknown woman textile printer; in the other, a woman ceramist will make her début with works made of a new material.

As a matter of fact, it is not an unusual thing for us to stage a special exhibition in the way that we collect the production of an artist craftsman against payment on account, to enable him to keep going until he has produced a sufficient number of articles to make a decent exhibition. In this manner, we assist many who cannot afford to produce any stock, and who consequently lose the chance afforded by an exhibition.

With regard to the anniversary, we have many other plans which have not yet been given final shape. But may I say in conclusion that, even though we are greatly indebted to

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Mr. Grauballe and to Mr. Aage E. Jensen for having held the organization together, the Danish artist craftsman is, however, the fundamental element. Without his efforts, it would never be possible to create a thing like DEN PERMANENTE. Nor would Danish arts and crafts, without his efforts, have achieved the standing and the reputation it enjoys, also in the big world. Danish arts and crafts hold a strong position, because their sterling quality is a natural thing to us Danes, cultivated as it is, through generations. Without the background of ancient culture, it is difficult to be creative. There must be a tradition to build on, and Danish arts and crafts certainly have such a tradition.